



## Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie Volunteer Position Description

**Title:** Chicago Botanic Garden, Plants of Concern (POC) Monitor at Midewin site

**Plants of Concern Background:** Plants of Concern engages citizen scientists to monitor the Chicago Wilderness region's rarest plants, assess trends in their populations, and provide important data used to conserve our rapidly declining floral heritage. Plants of Concern is coordinated by the Chicago Botanic Garden (CBG), having strong partnerships with local, state, federal and non-profit agencies. Currently, this project is funded through a grant program supported by the USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry, and the US Fish & Wildlife Service, in support of Chicago Wilderness.

**Purpose:** All ecological monitors at Midewin play a vital role in monitoring various species and habitats throughout restored and remnant habitats at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. POC monitors provide Midewin with valuable data that is used to evaluate management on and identify threats to rare plants. Plants of Concern monitors help directly with part one of Midewin's mission to conserve, restore, and enhance the native populations and habitats of fish, wildlife, and plants.

**Duties and Responsibilities:** Monitors are responsible for their own transportation. Midewin POC monitors will record Level 1 data which includes things such as population counts, size of the area that a population covers, percent reproductive, native plant associates, invasive species, and threats such as encroaching brush or deer browse. Monitors will collect data in known locations and look for new populations in appropriate habitat. Monitors also record additional data (Level 2) on a number of Midewin species such as height of individual plants and/or following plants from flowering to fruiting stage.

**Department and Location:** *This program now considers all POC monitors as Chicago Botanic Garden volunteers and therefore you must coordinate with CBG Volunteer Services by first contacting Rachel Goad at 847-835-6927 or [rgoad@chicagobotanic.org](mailto:rgoad@chicagobotanic.org).* If you are a volunteer for Midewin in another role, you are *Not* covered by your USFS Volunteer Agreement (Form 301a) for this program, but instead must complete CBG paperwork, which includes a background check. Field surveys will take place at various sites on Midewin and be led by the Chicago Botanic Garden/POC staff. Monitors will report to the POC Coordinator and/or the research assistant at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

**Qualifications:** Knowledge of local flora is helpful but not necessary. Ideal monitors have a passion for sensitive plants and native restorations. Most monitoring dates are scheduled for weekdays. (see time commitment). Schedule should be flexible because ending time varies slightly and many monitoring sites are within locked areas currently closed to the public. Monitoring plants requires a lot of standing, bending and kneeling in tall vegetation. Some populations are in wetlands, so monitors must navigate on uneven terrain through standing water. Some plants and plant parts are very inconspicuous and small, so good vision is required for proper identification and data collection. Monitors must be tolerant of heat and wind.

**Time Commitment:** The monitoring season is from mid-May through June, August and September. Most monitoring days are on weekdays. Occasionally a weekend day is scheduled for those with limited availability. Monitoring days typically run from 8:15 am to 3:30 pm, with half days as an option. Monitors will fulfill their commitment by monitoring at least 3 days per year. Monitors gain more experience every year and therefore data collection gets more accurate and efficient, so a multiple year commitment is preferred but not required.

**Training:** All monitors are highly encouraged to complete the POC orientation that will cover safety, protocols and available training materials. There are multiple training workshops to choose from in April depending on which county you live in. New monitors will join groups with experienced monitors and may have a chance to take on a site of their own. However this program was designed to accommodate a 'learn as you go' approach, so inexperienced but interested individuals are certainly welcome.

Please visit the Chicago Botanic Garden, Plants of Concern website at <http://www.plantsofconcern.org/>  
Midewin-specific information is at [http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/Rare\\_Plants/conservation/success/midewin\\_plants\\_of\\_concern.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/Rare_Plants/conservation/success/midewin_plants_of_concern.shtml)

**Working Conditions/Physical Effort:** Even though monitors are coordinated by CBG, they should read the U.S. Forest Service Job Hazard Analysis, which includes emergency plans, safety requirements and recommended best practices. Monitors may work in variable conditions including:

- Exposure to outdoor weather conditions, especially heat & allergens
- May be working near hazardous plants or insects
- Walking on uneven, possibly wet terrain and/or through tall vegetation
- Monitors are bending and standing for 2 or more hours at a time

**Benefits:** POC monitors have the unique experience to witness Midewin's rare species in protected areas. Volunteer monitors further the citizen scientist movement by collecting valuable data. Monitors will observe long-term progress towards the ecological restoration of Midewin. Be sure to ask CBG Volunteer Services about benefits of becoming a Chicago Botanic Garden volunteer.

**Related Midewin Opportunities:** Floristic quality monitors work as a team to identify native and non-native plant species present in each of Midewin's restoration areas and compile a species list which is assigned a floristic quality value and compared with that of native remnants or known high quality prairie restorations. Midewin's ecological monitors also monitor birds, stream insects, butterflies, frogs and water quality.